

# Israel offers to be flexible on 48-hour deadline for peace

### Arabs to call for UN trial of Israeli 'criminals'

JERUSALEM, Oct 20 : The 48-hour deadline for peace in the Palestinian territories is flexible, an Israeli government spokesman said today as the clock ticked down on a US-brokered ceasefire accord.

"We started to count from the meeting between security people from both sides (on Wednesday), so it's supposed to be late afternoon or evening. But we are flexible on this," foreign ministry spokesman Noam Katz told AFP.

"It's the longest two days that I know. But we are flexible on that. We don't have to change the rules of the game at the moment," he added.

But he reiterated the Israeli view that the Palestinian Authority did not want peace at this time.

"We think Arafat is not willing and not ready to do what is necessary. The international community can identify the same things," Katz said.

Israel has put the onus firmly on the Palestinians to stop violent incidents from occurring at Jewish settlements and Israeli army posts in the territories.

Palestinian leaders have repeatedly said they can do nothing to stop the stone-throwing Intifada, or uprising, which has characterised most of the violence of the past three weeks and led to more than 110 deaths.

"If the war is continuing on the ground -- nothing has really changed in the field --, you see deep involvement of Palestinians and Palestinian police in the events," the foreign ministry spokesman said.

"The level of intensity in the last two days is very similar to what happened before," Katz said.

He said the security committee comprising US, Israeli and Palestinian officials to coordinate compliance with the Sharm el-Sheikh summit accord still offered the best hope of achieving peace.

"We still hope that it will work," Katz said.

Meanwhile, Arab leaders are to study a call for the UN Security Council to put on trial Israeli "criminals" for the killings of around 100 Palesti-

inians in the last three weeks of violence, the PLO said today.

Arab foreign ministers are to make the recommendation for the summit on Saturday and Sunday in the Egyptian capital, the Palestine Liberation Organisation's political department chief, Faruq Qaddumi, told reporters.

The ministers who met here Thursday called for the formation of "tribunals to judge those who have committed crimes against the Palestinian people, and for the Security Council to implement this process," he said.

Qaddumi said the proposal would be part of a package of "political, economic and material support" measures to be submitted to Arab leaders at their emergency summit convened to debate the Israeli-Palestinian clashes.

Some Israeli states will threaten a break in ties "if the aggressions continue," he said, without naming them.

Several Arab diplomats, who asked not to be named, told AFP the summit will also demand the creation of an international commission of inquiry into the clashes in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Libyan leader Moammar Gaddafi on Wednesday revealed the contents of the draft resolution for the summit, the first gathering of Arab heads of state since 1996.

It proposes "denouncing" and "condemning" the Jewish state for the violence in the Palestinian territories, but Gaddafi charged that the draft was too soft on Israel in terms of concrete measures.

One good point in the draft, Gaddafi said, was a proposal to seek international legal action against "certain Israeli leaders," notably Ariel Sharon, the hawkish leader of Israel's right-wing Likud opposition.

It was a highly publicised September 28 visit by Sharon to a disputed holy site in Arab east Jerusalem sacred to both Jews and Muslims that sparked the clashes.

# ASEM summit begins amid street clashes

### Seoul Declaration for Peace on Korean peninsula endorsed

SEOUL, Oct 20 : Asian and European leaders today opened a summit that hailed moves toward peace on the Korean peninsula as police battled anti-capitalism demonstrators outside, reports AFP.

President Kim Dae-Jung of South Korea was praised by leaders at the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) summit, a week after he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, for his work to bring the rival Koreas together.

The 10 Asian and 15 European leaders also endorsed a Seoul Declaration for Peace on the Korean peninsula which applauded steps taken since Kim met the North's leader Kim Jong-Il for a historic summit in June.

Leaders renewed their support for the process of rapprochement and cooperation under way between South Korea and North Korea, and encouraged both

sides to continue building on the success of the summit for the sake of peace and security in the region," said the declaration.

It congratulated both Korean leaders for their attempts to end Cold War tension but China flexed its diplomatic muscle to force the removal of any reference to weapons of mass destruction.

Outside the summit, about 2,000 demonstrators fought riot police on the edge of a 1.5 km radius security cordon around the summit conference centre.

At least three students were seen away from the scene with head and face wounds after police restrained down baton blows on the demonstrators who were armed with their own makeshift batons.

Thousands of police with shields and batons had blocked a road intersection to stop the banned rally by radical students and union members marching on



Police scuffle with radical demonstrators during a protest rally against ASEM summit in Seoul on Friday. More than 3,000 police with riot shields and batons surrounded the anti-capitalist students and union members, while South Korean President Kim Dae-Jung (2nd R) is seen on the screen as he listens to the speech by his French counterpart Jacques Chirac during the opening ceremony of the third Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM). Prime ministers and presidents from across Asia and Europe were gathering to formally open a trans-continental summit amid an extraordinary mood of reconciliation towards North Korea.



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Moammar Gaddafi faces prosecution in France for jet bombing

PARIS, Oct 20 : A French court today gave the go ahead for legal proceedings against Libyan leader Moammar Gaddafi over the bomb attack on a French airliner 11 years ago which killed 170 people, reports AFP.

The appeal court in Paris ruled in favour of a suit launched by the families of victims demanding that Gaddafi face charges for "complicity to murder" over the explosion on a DC-10 belonging to the airline UTA.

The plane crashed in the Niger desert on September 19 1989. Six Libyans, including Gaddafi's brother-in-law -- have already been found guilty in absentia and given life sentences.

## Fanatic Juhi fan

BOMBAY, Oct 20 : An Indian youth attempted suicide in Bombay, India's movie capital, after a popular film actress refused to meet him, reports said today, reports AFP.

The Indian Express said Dheeraj Sharma, 29, a postgraduate in sociology from the eastern Indian city of Patna came to Bombay in the hope of hooking up with Juhi Chawla, one of India's five leading movie actresses.

Sharma landed up at Chawla's office on Tuesday, but was refused an appointment.

He returned in the evening and insisted on meeting Chawla, but security personnel refused him entry.

Sharma then took out a broken glass bottle and stabbed himself in the stomach. He was taken to hospital.

Indians are passionate about film.

The country produces about 900 movies a year -- more than any other nation -- and only cricketers rival movie stars in the celebrity stakes.

## Yet another 'honour' killing

ISLAMABAD, Oct 20 : Two Pakistani boys aged 11 and five are facing double murder charges after they allegedly slashed their teenage sisters' throats to protect their family's 'honour,' a report said today, reports AFP.

The boys murdered the girls, aged 16 and 18, in their sleep on Thursday to stop "teasing" by headmen in Dhadyan Chad village, central Punjab province, the News daily reported.

It did not explain what form of teasing the sisters were subjected to or why the boys reacted so violently, except that it was a matter of honour.

So-called "honour killings" of women are common in Pakistan, particularly in rural areas where women are murdered or mutilated for bringing shame to their families.

Pakistan's military-led government has vowed to crack down on the practice, saying it has no place in a modern Islamic society.

But human rights groups including Amnesty International say the police and judiciary often have a lenient attitude towards the killers.

# Lanka braces for more suicide bombing

### Troops resist heavy LTTE onslaught

COLOMBO, Oct 20 : Sri Lankan forensic experts today began investigating a suicide bombing that left three people dead and 21 wounded as police warned there could be more, devastating attacks, reports AFP.

But police questioned whether the attack blamed on the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) really meant to target the town hall.

The town hall could not have been target of the attack, "a senior police officer here said. 'Obviously something went wrong for them and we were lucky to have averted a bigger tragedy.'"

A police spokesman noted that Thursday's bombing was the fourth suicide bombing that had

apparently failed for Tamil Tigers in the capital this year.

On September 15, a Tamil Tiger suicide bomber detonated explosives strapped to his body as he was about to be body searched by police outside the main eye hospital here. A policeman and six bystanders were killed.

Colombo's police deputy inspector-general, Bodhi Liyanage, said they had information that at least 23 suicide bombers and another 15 of their supporters had entered the capital for more attacks.

Prime Minister Ratnasiri Wickrematunge stressed the need for additional precautions in his first address to the new cabinet sworn in shortly after Thurs-

day's bombing.

Several roads in the capital have been closed for fear of drive-by bombings by the Tamil Tigers who consider the suicide bombers, or Black Tigers, their "protective armour."

Meanwhile, Government forces repulsed a fresh onslaught by Tamil Tiger guerrillas in Sri Lanka's northern Jaffna peninsula amid heavy casualties on both sides, military officials here said today.

The separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) tried to use boats to land behind army lines at Nagarkovil in the Jaffna peninsula, but were beaten back, officials said.

## 'Humanitarian flights to Iraq more symbolic than useful'

UNITED NATIONS, Oct 20 : Flights sent to Iraq to test UN sanctions have had minimal effect on the humanitarian situation in the country, the United Nations humanitarian coordinator for Iraq, Toun Myat, said Thursday, reports AFP.

He also said that improvements in food and health were held back by the collapsing value of the Iraqi currency and by holds placed by the UN's sanctions committee on contracts to import electrical equipment.

Myat took over as coordinator of the oil-for-food programme in Iraq in April after Hans von Sponeck resigned in protest at what he called the "humanitarian tragedy" caused by sanctions.

He told a news conference that there had been "considerable progress" in the food sector, and every man, woman and child now received 2,470 kilocalories a day.

According to UN data, in the first half of the year, Iraqis

received on average 1,990 kilocalories.

The new amount "should be sufficient to sustain life," Myat said, but many people were selling their food rations in order to buy clothes and other necessities.

"For many of them, food rations represent the major part of their income," he said, adding that because of the falling exchange rate, many people lived on two or three dollars a month.

"That is what a junior civil servant would get," he said.

Myat said that foreign flights which began arriving in Iraq a month ago had "given (Iraq) moral support rather than anything else."

He said they carried only a "minuscule" amount of cargo compared with the 150,000-200,000 tonnes of food and equipment which Iraq imports "in an average month" under the UN's oil-for-food programme.

## Russia seeks support for new Y'slav leader

MOSCOW, Oct 20 : Increased international support for new Yugoslav President Vojislav Kostunica is "of primary importance," Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov was quoted today as saying, reports AFP.

"It is necessary to lift sanctions against Yugoslavia. The international community should again support Yugoslavia and offer it economic aid," Ivanov said upon his arrival in Bucharest.

"Russia always wanted the Balkans to be a zone of stability and prosperity," ITAR-Tass reported Ivanov as saying.

He added that the UN-run Yugoslav province of Kosovo was not ready for democratic elections.

"It cannot be normal conditions when a significant portion of the local population cannot participate in the elections," Ivanov

said, adding that some 230,000 people, mainly Serbs, were forced to flee Kosovo during the recent conflict.

In Bucharest, Ivanov will attend a conference of the Black Sea economic cooperation group, which includes Azerbaijan, Albania, Armenia, Bulgaria, Greece, Georgia, Moldova, Romania, Turkey, Ukraine and Russia.

For the next six months, Russia will chair the group, set up in 1992 after the break-up of the Soviet Union.

Last week the United States and the European Union announced the lifting of most of the main sanctions imposed against Serbia, the main province of Yugoslavia.

Sanctions against ousted president Slobodan Milosevic and members of his regime remain in place.

# Pakistan to maintain its nuclear moratorium

ISLAMABAD, Oct 20 : Pakistan said today it will not be the first country to resume nuclear testing provided its hand was not forced by any "extraordinary" development in the region, reports AFP.

Islamabad conducted nuclear weapons tests in May 1998 in response to detonations by rival neighbour India. Both countries declared afterwards a moratorium on further testing.

"Pakistan will maintain its moratorium until the coming into force of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT)," foreign office spokesman Riaz Mohammad Khan told a press briefing.

"But it will have to review this if there is an extraordinary development in the region," he said, apparently meaning a fresh atomic test by India.

He said Pakistan would take a decision on the CTBT "on the

basis of our own interest and assessment of the situation."

Pakistan was engaged in a process to evolve a national consensus on the CTBT while awaiting removal of the "coercive" atmosphere created by international sanctions imposed after the tests.

"However, Pakistan will not be the country which stands in the way of entry into force of the CTBT," he said.

Meanwhile, Israel should end violence against the Palestinians and seriously negotiate a settlement in accordance with United Nations resolutions, Pakistan said today.

Tuesday's Sharm el-Sheikh agreement requires Israel to "halt violence and withdraw its troops from Palestinian-controlled areas," a foreign office spokesman said at a press briefing.

"But Israeli violence and provo-

cation continues, causing deep concern and indignation in the Islamic world," said spokesman Riaz Mohammad Khan, adding Pakistan was closely watching developments, including the Arab summit this weekend.

"We, however, stand by the Palestinians and their cause," he said.

"We hope Israel will halt violence and provocations and enter into serious negotiations with Palestinians for a permanent settlement in accordance with the United Nations resolutions."

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat agreed to a 48-hour end of hostilities during the Sharm el-Sheikh summit earlier this week and the ceasefire deadline was later extended to Friday.

Arafat received Pakistan's firm backing when he met military ruler General Pervez Musharraf here in August.

## BRIEFLY

### Chechens kill 3 Russians:

Chechen rebels killed at least three Russian servicemen in a new wave of hit-and-run attacks staged across the rebel republic, Moscow news reports said Friday, AFP says from Moscow.

One police officer shot dead in an overnight attack in the southern village Argun, while another police officer was killed in Shali, ITAR-TASS reported. The office of Kremlin spokesman Sergei Yastzhenbysky further confirmed that one soldier died in hospital Thursday following an ambush of a moving Russian column in Dzhalka, a small settlement just south of the region's administrative center Gudermes.

### Laos plane crash kills eight

HANOI, Oct 20 : Eight people, including a German, a Singaporean and a South African, were killed when a Lao Aviation plane on an internal flight crashed into the remote northeastern mountains, airline officials said today.

Four Indians were among nine survivors from Thursday's crash near the provincial capital of Xam Neua, but all were in critical condition, an airline official told AFP from Vientiane.

### Gore, Bush travel cautious road on immigration

MIAMI, Oct 20 : More than 26 million immigrants in the United States, the majority Hispanic, hope that the November 7 election of a new president will better their situation, despite the fact that immigration is essentially absent from the campaign, reports AFP.

The Democratic candidate, Vice President Al Gore, and his Republican rival, Texas Governor George W. Bush, have opted for vagueness, keeping a low profile on the controversial issue.

Only 13 percent of the US population favours increasing the number of immigrants allowed into the country, according to a September Gallup poll.

"It's dangerous for Bush, because the Republican base is anti-immigrant, and it is dangerous for Gore because immigrants



Republican presidential candidate George W Bush (L) shakes hands with his Democratic opponent Al Gore (R) as Archbishop of New York Edward Egan watches on Thursday at the Alfred Emanuel Smith Memorial Foundation Dinner in New York City.



Sikh protesters belonging to the regional National Akali Dal party shout anti-government slogans in New Delhi yesterday during a protest against the recent deaths of two men in a New Delhi police lockup last week which led to street rioting in the Indian capital. The city's law enforcement agencies have come under attack for the unexplained deaths of up to six people following their detention by local detectives in the current year.

## World conflicts killed 100,000 in past year

LONDON, Oct 20 : At least 100,000 people have died in armed conflicts in the past year, the majority of them in sub-Saharan Africa, according to the International Institute of Strategic Studies (IISS), reports AFP.

Meanwhile Europe and the United States argued over how to react to the new strategic realities, the London-based IISS said in its annual report, released Thursday, on the world military balance.

Wars and civil unrest continued unabated in Africa, the Middle East, Latin America, notably Colombia, and southeast Asia, particularly Indonesia.

The Caucasus region, notably Chechnya, and central Asia were the scenes of unresolved and persistent conflict, it added.

However, around 60 percent of the deaths toll came from sub-Saharan Africa, where conflicts were recorded between Ethiopia and Eritrea, in central Africa, Sierra Leone and southern Sudan.

The IISS noted "transatlantic tensions" between Washington and its European allies as they tried to reform their military capabilities.

It said: "Differences have arisen in particular, over US plans for national missile defence and sharing the burden of force contributions to peacekeeping operations."

US and Western European armed forces were overstretched by commitments to peacekeeping in the Balkans, Africa and Asia, the IISS added.

## CM denies abandoning Kashmir autonomy bid

NEW DELHI, Oct 20 : The chief minister of the troubled Indian state of Kashmir, Farooq Abdullah, rejected today suggestions that he had abandoned his demands for regional autonomy, reports AFP.

"We are moving forward and hope that the issue will be solved peacefully," Abdullah said.

The minister's political opponents Thursday accused his ruling National Conference party in Kashmir of "surrendering" to central government pressure to shelve the autonomy issue.

Abdullah, who was inaugurating a seminar in New Delhi, emphasised that autonomy was the only way to make India strong and vibrant.

"Autonomy does not mean secession from the country and, in fact, this would make New Delhi more strong," Abdullah said.

Devolution is necessary and the central government should make suitable arrangements while reviewing the constitution, he added.

In June this year, the National Conference pushed through a resolution in the state assembly demanding complete autonomy for Kashmir, except in the areas of foreign affairs, finance and defence.

The Indian cabinet rejected the proposal on July 4, saying it was a first step towards secession.